



Heather Shirley Smith
Deputy General Counsel

Duke Energy
40 W. Broad Street
Suite 690
Greenville, SC 29601

o: 864.370.5045
f: 864.370.5183

heather.smith@duke-energy.com

March 20, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING

The Honorable Jocelyn G. Boyd Chief
Clerk and Executive Director
Public Service Commission of South Carolina
101 Executive Center Drive, Suite 100
Columbia, South Carolina 29210

**RE: Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC's, Duke Energy Progress, LLC's and
Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc.'s Updated Notice of Action in
Response to Concerns Stemming From COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
Docket: 2020-106-A**

Dear Ms. Boyd:

Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC ("DEC"), Duke Energy Progress, LLC ("DEP") and Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc. ("Piedmont") (DEP, DEC and Piedmont collectively referred to as the "Companies") hereby provide the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the "Commission") an update on the Companies' operational actions and preparations in response to concerns stemming from the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. The Companies also provide herein important information about charitable donations to ease our customers' burdens.

DEC and DEP have been contacted about assisting and expediting additional power needs (temporary power, lighting, etc.) to counties who are opening testing facilities or mobile hospitals in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, we will meet these requests. Technicians will continue to complete service orders—such as new electric connections and requested disconnections—and continue to respond to outages and other emergencies. However, services that are not urgent or time-sensitive and require in-person customer contact by DEC and DEP employees will be rescheduled. DEC and DEP will contact customers to reschedule those appointments.

The Companies keep robust business continuity plans, referred to as Continuity of Operations plans, to ensure critical functions continue operating under a broad range of circumstances. These include all-hazard emergencies, national security emergencies and natural, man-made and technological threats. The Companies recently completed Continuity of Operations reviews of the critical functions needed to serve the energy needs of our customers. The reviews focused on human resource contingencies, information technology, supply chain, operational readiness, safety, environmental compliance, customer communications and public information.

The Honorable Jocelyn G. Boyd
March 20, 2020
Page 2

The Companies have also activated the Incident Command System for the enterprise and Incident Management Teams to coordinate the response to COVID-19 across the states in the Duke Energy enterprise. To ensure immediate and continued response, alternate locations are at the ready or in use.

The Companies are not seeing significant impacts to the supply chain at this time, and it remains stable. We are prepared to rotate suppliers if needed. Similar to most large companies and organizations, the Companies continue to monitor and order critical cleaning supplies, recognizing hospitals and medical systems are the national priority.

Our electric grid continues to meet our customers' energy needs. We are closely monitoring grid operations and coordinating with industry partners to ensure the overall stability and reliability of the grid across the U.S. Interstate and local natural gas delivery systems are operating effectively. The Companies are aware that email phishing attempts and other scams related to the coronavirus are on the rise, and we are reminding workers to be vigilant and avoid clicking on any suspicious links or opening emails from unknown senders.

Duke Energy has issued the attached press release in order to advise customers and our communities about the Companies' plans, including the suspension of disconnections already effectuated and waiver of late fees. The Companies will waive late payment fees and fees for returned payments for its millions of electric and natural gas customers across its service territories beginning Saturday March 21 until the state of emergency is lifted. Additional time was needed for this action for IT work to implement the billing change. Additionally, we are cautioning our customers to be aware of scammers, who continue to target customers, threatening disconnection of service and asking for immediate payment over the phone. We are reiterating in communications that the Companies would never ask for personal information over the phone or demands payment using money orders or gift cards.

The attached press release also includes an announcement of \$1.3 million in donations by The Duke Energy Foundation to support hunger relief and help local health and human services nonprofits across its service territories, including those providing meals to children and families impacted by school closures. Given the unprecedented nature of the situation, Duke Energy is giving nonprofits the flexibility to use the funds where most needed. I have also attached a fact sheet on the portion of that donation applicable to South Carolina, which details a \$250,000 donation in the state of South Carolina to help customers, communities and employees. The Companies recognize the critical needs in our communities and have dedicated funds for rapid assistance, with a focus on hunger relief and assisting local health and human services nonprofits. The funds in South Carolina will focus primarily on hunger relief in counties where Duke Energy operates.

- \$100,000 will be donated to Harvest Hope to be used for hunger relief.
- \$150,000 will be earmarked to help local organizations serve their communities.

The Honorable Jocelyn G. Boyd
March 20, 2020
Page 3

In addition, we are increasing flexibility with our 2019 grantee partners during these uncertain times to include challenge grant opportunities and the ability to use remaining funds toward general operating expenses.

We continue to monitor impacts and make decisions accordingly. The Companies will keep the Commission, the ORS and customers informed of the Companies actions and plans.

Sincerely,



Heather Shirley Smith

Attachments

cc: Nanette Edwards, Office of Regulatory Staff (via email)
Jeff M. Nelson, Esq., Office of Regulatory Staff (via email)
Jenny Pittman, Esq., Office of Regulatory Staff (via email)
Becky Dover, Esq., SC Dept of Consumer Affairs (via email)
Carri Grube Lybarker, Esq., SC Dept of Consumer Affairs (via email)
K. Chad Burgess, Esq., Dominion Energy of SC, Inc. (via email)
Matthew W. Gissendanner, Esq., Dominion Energy of SC, Inc. (via email)



News Release

Media contact: 800.559.3853

March 19, 2020

Duke Energy and Piedmont Natural Gas take new steps to help customers, communities and employees in wake of COVID-19

- **Will waive certain payment fees**
- **\$1.3 million donated to help COVID-19 relief**
- **Some employees will receive cash payments to help offset virus-related expenses**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Duke Energy and Piedmont Natural Gas today announced a comprehensive set of steps to help customers, communities and employees manage the economic hardship caused by COVID-19.

“This is an unprecedented crisis that requires an unprecedented response,” said Lynn Good, Duke Energy’s chairman, president and CEO. “We hope the customers and communities we are privileged to serve – and the outstanding Duke Energy employees who serve them – will take some comfort from these actions.”

More Help for Customers

The company will waive late payment fees and fees for returned payments for its millions of electric and natural gas customers across its service territories beginning Saturday March 21 until the national state of emergency is lifted. For residential customers, the company will also waive fees for credit and debit card payments.

Last week, Duke Energy said it would [discontinue service disconnections](#) for unpaid bills. That covers 7.8 million electric customers; plus, 1.8 million natural gas customers, many of whom are served by Piedmont Natural Gas.

“Our goal is to continue providing reliable service while helping our most vulnerable customers during this extraordinary time,” Good said.

Community Assistance

The company also announced \$1.3 million in donations by The Duke Energy Foundation to support hunger relief and help local health and human services nonprofits across its service territories, including those providing meals to children and families impacted by school closures. Given the unprecedented nature of the situation, Duke Energy is giving nonprofits the flexibility to use the funds where most needed.

Relief for Employees

To aid in providing continued service to our customers through this event, Duke Energy will also expand assistance to employees, in order to maintain the highest level of service to customers. This is part of the company's larger donation.

The company is providing five additional personal days off to employees who experience a disruption in dependent care due to school, daycare or other child-related care – as most all schools are not in session. Duke Energy will also provide a \$1,500 stipend to assist with unplanned expenses resulting from costs related to COVID-19 issue.

As part of the company's larger donation, for Duke Energy employees, the company is donating \$100,000 to the Relief4Employees program, which is a fund that employees can draw on for short term financial help during times of personal need.

Continued service to customers

The company will continue to read meters in most areas and send bills. Customers should pay what they can to avoid building up large balances that will be more difficult to pay off later.

Duke Energy power plants, electricity and natural gas delivery facilities and call centers, are staffed, ensuring dependable service to customers. The company will continue to respond to power outages and other emergencies.

Customers should download the company's mobile app or visit duke-energy.com or piedmontng.com for information and most service transactions. Customers who are unable to self-serve can still contact the company:

- Duke Energy Carolinas: 1-800-777-9898
- Duke Energy Progress: 1-800-419-6356
- Duke Energy Florida: 1-800-700-8744
- Duke Energy Indiana: 1-800-521-2232
- Duke Energy Ohio/Kentucky: 1-800-543-5599
- Piedmont Natural Gas: 1-800-752-7504

Duke Energy

Duke Energy (NYSE: DUK) is headquartered in Charlotte, N.C. It employs 29,000 people and has an electric generating capacity of 51,000 megawatts through its regulated utilities, and 3,000 megawatts through its nonregulated Duke Energy Renewables unit.

The Duke Energy Foundation provides philanthropic support to meet the needs of communities where Duke Energy customers live and work. The foundation contributes

Duke Energy News Release

more than \$30 million annually in charitable gifts, and is funded by Duke Energy shareholder dollars. More information about the foundation and its Powerful Communities program can be found at duke-energy.com/foundation.

More information about the company is available at duke-energy.com. The [Duke Energy News Center](#) contains news releases, fact sheets, photos, videos and other materials. Duke Energy's [illumination](#) features stories about people, innovations, community topics and environmental issues. Follow Duke Energy on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

Piedmont Natural Gas

Piedmont Natural Gas, a subsidiary of Duke Energy, is an energy services company whose principal business is the distribution of natural gas to more than 1 million residential, commercial and industrial customers in North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The company also supplies natural gas to power plants.

###

South Carolina COVID-19 Relief

Duke Energy Foundation pledges \$250,000 in South Carolina COVID-19 relief

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Duke Energy Foundation is contributing \$250,000 in the state of South Carolina to help its customers, communities and employees.

We recognize the critical needs in our communities and have dedicated funds for rapid assistance, with a focus on hunger relief and assisting local health and human services nonprofits.

The funds in South Carolina will focus primarily on hunger relief in counties where Duke Energy operates.

- \$100,000 will be donated to Harvest Hope to be used for hunger relief.
- \$150,000 will be earmarked to help local organizations serve their communities.

In addition, we are increasing flexibility with our 2019 grantee partners during these uncertain times to include challenge grant opportunities and the ability to use remaining funds toward general operating expenses.

As the crisis unfolds, we will evaluate other areas where we can best support our customers, communities and employees.

